DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 496 IR 013 018

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TITLE 'You and Me': The Construction of Subjectivity in Television for the Pre-School Child.
PUB DATE Jul 86
NOTE 68p.; Paper presented at the International Television Studies Conference (London, England, July 10-12, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Psychology; *Childrens Television; *Classification; Comparative Analysis; Educational Psychology; *Educational Television; Foreign Countries; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Programing (Broadcast); *Research Methodology; Student Centered Curriculum; *Television Research
IDENTIFIERS United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Based on an analysis of programs in a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) series transmitted during the 1984-1985 school year, this discussion of the pedagogy of educational television in Great Britain reviews previous analyses of children's television from both a media studies perspective and from within educational psychology, and proposes an alternative mode of investigation that examines the forms of subject positioning used within the programs. This investigation attempts to make connections between theories of discourse developed within film and literary theory and recent accounts of subjectivity provided by critical works in child psychology. The main part of the paper presents an illustrated typology of modes of subject positioning and a comparative analysis identifying a shift in pedagogic style that has occurred in the BBC series over the past five years. It concludes with a critique of the progressivist or child-centered emphasis of the more recent material, and of its covert models of social regulation. (57 references) (Author/CGD)

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'YOU AND ME' : THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN TELEVISION FOR THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

by

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PAPER PRESENTED TO THE 1986 INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION STUDIES CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

'You and Me': the Construction of Subjectivity in Television for the Pre-school Child

This paper is based on an analysis of programmes in the BBC series You and Me transmitted in the school year 1984-85. Following a discussion of previous analyses of children's television, both from a Media Studies perspective and from within Educational Psychology, it proposes an alternative mode of investigation which examines the forms of subject positioning employed within the programmes. This investigation attempts to make connections between theories of discourse developed within Film and Literary Theory, and recent accounts of subjectivity provided by critical work in Child Psychology. The main part of the paper presents an illustrated typology of modes of subject positioning, and a comparative analysis identifying a shift in pedagogic style which has occurred in the series over the past five years. It concludes with a critique of the 'progressivist' emphasis of the more recent material, and of its covert models of social regulation.

'YOU AND ME' : THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN TELEVISION FOR THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

PREFACE

This paper is part of a broader research project investigating the pedagogy of educational television in Britain. An earlier paper (Buckingham, 1986) attempted to identify the definitions of teaching and learning which have informed educational broadcasters' rationales for their work. This paper is the first of three case studies which will consider how these definitions are manifested in the textual strategies of specific programmes. The ultimate aim of this analysis is to develop a theoretical framework which will account for the particular ways in which educational television addresses its viewers and seems to implicate them in the learning process.

On a very basic level, we can be said to 'learn' from all forms of television. Yet educational television may be defined as television which more or less explicitly attempts to 'teach'. In other words, it attempts to position viewers in particular ways, as 'learners'. 'Learning' from educational programmes may thus invoke specific sets of orientations and expectations which are different from those invoked by non-educational programmes.

Educational television is rarely viewed without some form of mediation, whether by teachers or parents. In order to reach

its target audience, educational television has to appeal not merely to the real characteristics of that audience, but also to what these 'mediators' perceive such characteristics to be. If teachers or parents are to allow (or, indeed, to compel) children to watch, educational television must perforce connect with their notions of what 'teaching' and 'learning' are, and what they take children to be. In particular, there are likely to be relationships between the ways in which educational television defines learning and thereby seeks to construct the learner, and teachers' professional ideologies.

In stating that my central concern is with pedagogy, therefore, I am indicating an emphasis on the ideology of teaching and learning which informs educational television. Rather than defining ideology as a property of the text, an underlying meaning which can be deciphered through analysis, I am concerned to investigate the ideological process which the text initiates. According to this formulation, ideology is not merely what the text 'says', but also, crucially, how it works. As I shall argue, this approach raises many productive questions, which extend beyond the hitherto somewhat limited focus of previous ideological analyses of educational television.

PART ONE

1. Introduction

Previous studies of learning from educational television have been informed by two main perspectives, which have hitherto developed almost entirely separately. The first of these, which I shall broadly term Media Studies, has tended to concentrate on the textual analysis of television programmes; while the second, Educational Psychology, has generated a considerable body of research into the learning behaviour of child viewers. Although my own approach in this paper derives primarily from Media Studies, and thus privileges textual analysis, I hope to indicate a number of potential points of contact between the two perspectives. In the first part of the paper, I shall identify what I would regard as crucial absences within each perspective, and then proceed to indicate some more productive connections between recent critical work in Educational Psychology and emerging 'reader-oriented' approaches in Literary Theory and Media Studies. The second part of the paper will seek to illustrate the potential application of such an approach in an analysis of the BBC series for pre-school children You and Me.

2. A Media Studies Perspective

Compared with the ever-growing body of critical work in Media Studies which has analysed areas such as news and television fiction, educational television and children's television

have been severely neglected. Educational television has characteristically been located outside the main field of study, while accounts of children's television have tended towards polemic rather than detailed analysis. This work has tended to concentrate exclusively on questions of representation. Programmes have typically been assessed in terms of a 'hidden curriculum' of racist, sexist and otherwise 'biased' assumptions which are seen to inform their representation of the social world. This approach, while clearly raising important issues, has tended to bypass two significant problems: on the one hand, there is often considerable confusion about the relationship between 'representations' and 'reality', while, on the other, the role of the reader/viewer in constructing meanings from these representations has often been seen in extremely simplistic terms.

I would like briefly to substantiate these claims by examining a recent and relatively typical article which addresses these issues: Maureen Lalor's 'The Hidden Curriculum' (Lalor, 1980). Lalor's article is based on a content analysis of six weeks of children's television, and investigates its representation of sex roles, race, class, occupations, possessions, authority, the status of individuals within society and 'the nature of reality'. It concludes that such programmes tend to reinforce traditional stereotypes in areas such as race and gender, while other areas, such as class, tend to remain unrepresented. In the area of 'sex roles', for example, Lalor points to 'the preponderance of male over female presenters and participants';

while in the area of occupations, she argues that the programmes concentrate on 'familiar and traditional occupations' and on those which are 'novel and exciting', while ignoring 'manufacture and production' and 'what could be termed 'run of the mill' jobs.

The clear implication here is that systematic imbalances in the representation of specific social groups result in a distorted, inaccurate image of the world. This 'bias' leads fairly directly to attitudes which are, in Lalor's view, undesirable. To take the two categories indicated above, she argues that from their television viewing children 'will almost certainly infer that men are more important than women', and that

> ' in their representation, or deliberate non-representation of occupations the television companies act as a conservative force for the reinforcement of middle-class attitudes in the education of children'. (pp 80, 83)

Underlying Lalor's argument, however, is a crucial contradiction between the demand for 'accuracy' and the demand for 'positive images'. The representation of 'sex roles' on children's television, for instance, is seen as reflecting ' a conservative version of a social system that ceased at least a decade ago.' Television producers, she argues, 'must decide whether to perpetuate a conservative ideal or to '<u>represent current reality</u>' (p.80, my emphasis). At the same time, representations which show particular groups in a negative light are condemned as 'stereotypes' - for instance 'the

authoritarian West Indian female games mistress, the quiet, obedient Asian girls, the anxious, protective Indian father' in BBC's Grange Hill (p 81). On the one hand, then, there is the argument that television should and could accurately represent 'reality', and that its level of accuracy can be assessed in terms of a (statistical) comparison with the real world. Yet cutting across this argument is the demand for 'positive' representations, even when the 'reality' itself may be 'negative' - this is the basis on which Lalor condemns the emphasis on 'poverty and backwardness' in representations of other cultures (p 81). Yet in a further contradiction, Lalor criticises producers for teaching children that 'people are more important than things' as a form of 'moral training'. Yet 'moral training' would be a fair description of the kind of television Lalor would appear to favour - television which would faithfully represent reality except for those aspects which might lead to undesirable attitudes.

Although Lalor professes to adopt a semiotic approach, and refers to television communication in terms of 'encoding' and 'decoding' (cf. Hall, 1980), her basic methodology is that of statistical content analysis. She assumes that the systematic biases revealed by such analysis will inevitably have a direct effect on the audience, particularly on a child audience conceived of as 'impressionable' (p 88). Television is thus accorded an extraordinary power as an agent of socialisation, a power which 'certainly rivals and probably exceeds the power of formal educational institutions' (p 78). The 'encoded

messages' of television, Lalor argues, 'act to maintain the status quo, to perpetuate traditional and conservative beliefs and attitudes' (p 88).

The problems with this approach are, I would suggest, two-fold. Firstly, Lalor's statistical analysis inevitably ignores the formal aspects of television, or what Heath and Skirrow (1977) have termed its 'specific signifying practices'. It measures content, as if content could be objectively identified and its meaning unproblematically defined: at the very least, this is to ignore how 'content' is organised within different texts and made available to viewers. The second, and related, problem is that such an approach tends to presume that the meanings extracted through analysis are identical with those produced by viewers. It tends to ignore the differences between readings in favour of a relatively monolithic view of media effects.

In this respect, Lalor's argument replicates 'commonsense wisdom' about the role of television in children's lives. Despite accumulating evidence to the contrary (e.g. Cullingford (1984), Durkin (1985)), most public debate about television tends to take for granted that it is an extremely powerful, and generally negative influence on children. Campaigning books for parents (e.g. Winn (1977), Large (1980)), often using highly questionable academic and medical evidence, have typically described children's use of television in terms of addiction and passivity, and as harmful to physical and mental health. As Connell (1985) has argued, this estimation of the 'fabulous powers' of

television is shared by critics of both Left and Right, not least because television provides a convenient scapegoat for what are perceived as threatening and undesirable social changes. In educational terms, this argument may be seen to be based on a dominant view of children as vulnerable and powerless, and therefore in need of adult protection.

This is not to imply that, on the contrary, television is an insignificant influence on young children - a position argued strongly by Cullingford (1984), for example. I would merely wish to suggest that a good deal of research has failed to confirm such sweeping claims about the powers of television and that, at the very least, we should beware of assuming that children simply and uncritically accept what they watch. The problem with Lalor's argument - and in this respect it is typical of similar work in Media Studies, such as Mattelart and Waksman (1978) on Sesame Street - is that its methodology is fundamentally incapable of substantiating its broad rhetorical assertions about the influence of television. The effects of a text cannot be simply read off from an analysis of its content.

Lalor barely acknowledges the possibility that children may in fact question or refuse television's representation of the social world. She concedes that 'they may decide that the reality of television differs from their own experience of life and their own social contacts', but goes on to assert that 'They will almost certainly infer that men are more important than women' (my emphasis, P 80). The underlying uncertainty indicated by the qualifying terms 'may' and 'almost'

in these quotations is characteristically repressed in Lalor's account, yet it is clearly worth opening up and investigating. It may well be that television encourages children to believe things which precisely contradict their own experience. Yet if we are to understand how and why this occurs, or does not occur, in particular situations (rather than simply assuming that it always does) we shall require a far more complex model of the televisual text and of the viewing process than such a content analysis can provide. In terms of the text, which is my particular focus here, we will need to account not merely for 'content', but also, crucially, for the mechanisms whereby viewers are encouraged and enabled to produce meaning. In other words, we will need to regard the text, not as a structure which exists independently of the viewing subject, but as a process of structuration, whereby particular forms of subjectivity are constructed.

3. The Contribution of Educational Psychology

Ultimately, then, the major absence in the Media Studies account of educational/children's television is of a consideration of process - both in the sense of the viewing or learning process, and (at least in the kind of statistical content analysis represented by Lalor), of the text-as-process, and its specific signifying practices. Educational Psychology would, at least potentially, appear to provide an understanding of at least the first of these processes. Yet, as I shall indicate, it is only comparatively recently that the issue of how children learn from television has been addressed. As Bates concludes in a

recent article,

> 'One thing is absolutely clear. Once we start examining television in terms of the way it affects our thinking, a vast, fathomless pit opens up. Our ignorance here is frightening. Programmes are made day in, day out, with no idea on any one's part of how they are affecting the way people think. (...) surely in educational television we ought to care, not only about the content of programmes, but also about the processes of thinking that the programmes stimulate or develop' (Bliss et al., 1983, p 45).

One reason for this neglect is that previous psychological research has in fact been predominantly concerned with the effectiveness of educational television - with what children learn, particularly in terms of content, rather than how. Such research tends to concentrate on measuring whether producers' intentions have been achieved in terms of children's learning outcomes: and it may thus ignore outcomes which are less easily measured, and which may not correspond to stated intentions.

The case of Sesame Street, which I have considered in some detail elsewhere (Buckingham, forthcoming), illustrates the disadvantages of such an approach. To summarise these briefly, I would argue that an approach which measures outcomes against intentions, such as that adopted by the Educational Testing Service research into Sesame Street (Ball and Bogatz, 1970; Bogatz and Ball, 1972) tends to preclude the critical evaluation of those intentions. Subsequent research on the programme (e.g. Cook et al., 1975; Sprigle, 1972), in fact suggested

that these intentions were in themselves contradictory: and a more radical argument, such as that of Holt (1971), has questioned the 'cultural deprivation' model on which they were based. Futhermore, such 'effectiveness' research inevitably tends to ignore the 'hidden curriculum', both in terms of the covert values and beliefs the series might appear to promote, and in terms of its pedagogy, or style of teaching and learning. On the former issue, writers like Goldsen (1976) and Mattelart and Waksman (1978) have argued, on the basis of content analysis, that Sesame Street celebrates the values of American capitalism and consumerism. On the issue of pedagogy, writers like Holt (1971) and Barreto (1979) have accused the programme of 'under-teaching' and emphasising mechanical forms of rote-learning.

However valid or invalid these arguments may be, they clearly raise issues which traditional 'effectiveness' research has tended to ignore. This is at least partly because, in addressing 'effects' rather than 'effectiveness', they inevitably transcend the producers' stated intentions, and raise questions about longer-term and less easily measurable outcomes.

These limitations are, without doubt, recognised by most researchers in the field. For example, Hobsbaum and Ghikas (1979), investigating the short-term effectiveness of You and Me, found that the programme was achieving its instructional objectives in teaching pre-reading and early mathematical skills, but acknowledge that they were unable to investigate what they term 'diffuse and general' or 'less tangible' effects. Yet it

is surely only by raising questions about such effects that research is likely to get beyond measuring effectiveness and to begin to understand the process of learning from television.

Such questions have begun to be raised by Educational Psychologists in two main areas, which I shall now briefly consider. The first of these is in the study of the relationship between Child Development and television viewing. Much of this work relies very heavily on the theories of Piaget, to a degree which is frankly surprising given the extensive critiques to which it has been subjected (e.g. Donaldson, 1978). Noble (1975), for example, produces an account of the televiewing styles of children at each of Piaget's developmental stages, which represents a steady progression towards the 'sophistication which will take final shape at the university film club' (p 108). Choat (1984) similarly accepts Piaget unquestioningly, yet raises issues which should give the users and producers of pre-school television considerable pause for thought. He asserts that

> 'Young (pre-operational) children have not yet reached the stage of mental development which employs abstract reasoning to rationalise and deduce from indirect experience ... Young children cannot make the jump in logical deduction no matter how realistically events are portrayed in a television programme' (p 152).

Pre-operational children, Choat argues, cannot make links between what they see and hear on television and their own experiences, and therefore require a parent or teacher to make these links for them. Since they cannot generalise, 'They will not

necessarily see the links which a producer attempts to portray in an educational television programme' : it may take months or even years, he argues, for incidents seen on television to become experiences 'accomodated into a particular schema' (p 154).

The subsequent research of Choat, Griffin and Hobart (1985a, 1985b, 1985c) proceeds from this basic Piagetian framework. 'Pre-operational' children are typified as egocentric, incapable of reasoning or generalisation, unable to distinguish between fact and fantasy, or to make sense of symbolic representations in terms of their own past experience. Their analysis of children's responses to a Seeing and Doing programme suggests that, as a result, children of this age may understand very little of what they see on television. 'This implies.' they argue,

> 'that television cannot be used for the direct teaching of children at the pre-operational level of development ... to attempt to try to convey a message, or in fact to try to convey a particular block of information, to children at the pre-operational level of development without adult interaction is pointless. The children are unable to process the information and cannot interpret what is being portrayed' (1985c, pp 105-6).

These conclusions are, it must be said, based on a single small-scale research project, and in many respects contradict more extensive work such as the ETS research on Sesame Street. Nevertheless, such work does indicate that the process of

learning from television may be considerably more complex and less reliable than 'effectiveness' research suggests. Where it falls down, I would argue, is in its unquestioning adoption of a simplified Piagetian framework, and its lack of a fully social theory of learning. The 'pre-operational child' is typically studied as an abstract generalisation, and the central structuring forces of class, race and gender unproblematically written out as 'cultural variables', or simply ignored altogether.

Durkin (1985) argues that cognitive-developmental approaches such as that of Piaget tend to neglect the social aspects of learning, that is, the relationship between the child's development and the surrounding culture, and the social or interpersonal context within which learning takes place. Durkin argues for a social-psychological approach, which links notions of socialisation to those of child development, and which emphasises the affective as well as the cognitive aspects of development. His own study attempts to relate the representation of sex-roles on television with accounts of sex-role acquisition, and suggests that, far from being passively 'conditioned' by television, children are cognitively active viewers, who use their social understanding of sex-role behaviour, their 'social scripts', to explain stereotypical sex-role behaviour on television. Durkin's work is important, not merely because it seriously questions the simplistic arguments about the powerful influence of television referred to in the previous section, but also because it offers a model of

television viewing which is inter-active and dynamic. The 'script model' of communication which he proposes is centrally concerned with the relationship between the 'scripts' of television (e.g. its narratives) and the 'scripts' of its viewers (i.e. their orientations and expectations, their mental repertoires for dealing with aspects of the world). There are significant similarities between the psychological approach Durkin outlines and 'reader-oriented' approaches in literary theory and Media Studies - notably the reception theory of Iser (1978) and Jauss (1982), and the encoding/ decoding model in semiotics proposed by Hall (1980) and Eco (1981).

Where Durkin's account is perhaps less useful, however, is in its analysis of television itself. Here, while acknowledging its methodological weaknesses, he resorts to a straightforward statistical content analysis, which is in many respects similar to that of the Lalor article discussed in the previous section. The further development of a 'script model' would clearly necessitate a more complex analysis of the 'scripts' of television texts, and would need to focus on more formal aspects of narrative, mode of address and point of view, such as those considered in some detail in the second part of this paper.

These aspects are beginning to be addressed in the second area of psychological research which I shall consider here, which is concerned with the relationship between the formal features of television and children's learning. Bates (1980),

drawing on the distinction made by Olson and Bruner (1974) between knowledge and skills, suggests that a television programme may provide 'a model of the form of thinking which is necessary for mastering certain learning tasks', and asks whether there are relationships between particular 'symbol systems' employed by television and particular kinds of 'mental operations' (p 411). As Bates indicates, there is as yet very little empirical evidence which would enable us to answer such questions, although there is a considerable need for further investigation.

Meyer (1983) collects a number of recent contributions to this field, although many of the papers focus on a very restricted range of 'formal features' and on short-term effectiveness. Rice, Huston and Wright (1983), for example, attempt to define the perceptually salient characteristics which appear to lead to increased attention to television, and to investigate the relationship between perceptual salience, informativeness and comprehension. A more sophisticated study by Salomon (1983) suggests that although such studies do have a limited value, they need to take more account of the contexts of viewing, and in particular the contexts provided by children's own motivations and purposes in using television, and their pre-conceptions about the medium itself.

The distinct danger of such research, I would argue, is precisely that it may tend to abstract television, and learning from television, from its social and historical context. The formal features and conventions of television are clearly

not the result of a series of arbitrary choices, but, on the contrary, have evolved historically, through a complex interaction of political, social and economic forces. If we are to understand how and why television 'makes sense' to viewers, we need to study its signifying practices as products of specific social and historical institutions. As Metz (1975) has indicated, media institutions generate not only texts, but also 'mental machinery', a set of competencies, or strategies for producing meaning, which audiences come to internalise historically. In other words, formal features cannot be regarded merely as perceptual stimuli which produce particular responses, or degrees of attention, in viewers. Viewers are social and historical subjects, and their reading of television cannot be studied in isolation from the social and interpersonal contexts in which it takes place, or from the 'mental machinery' which they bring to it.

4. Towards an Alternative Approach

The separation between the two approaches to studying educational television outlined in the previous sections might in a certain sense be regarded as symptomatic of a more general separation within what could broadly be termed the 'human sciences'. On the one hand, Media Studies is concerned with understanding socialisation through the analysis of specific social phenomena, or texts. On the other, Educational Psychology is concerned with studying individual consciousness through the analysis of specific mental processes. The individual and the social are thereby theorised as separate,

and exclusive, domains.

While it is certainly beyond the ambitions of this paper (!) to offer even a tentative synthesis of these two perspectives, I would like to indicate some potential points of contact between recent theoretical work in Literary and Media Studies and critical work in Educational Psychology, which might at least point in a more productive direction. The concern of these approaches might be defined as a concern with the social construction of subjectivity.

Recent developments in semiotics have seen a general shift away from a view of ideology as a system of representations towards the study of the operation of ideology within discursive practices. Critiques of 'classical semiotics' have questioned the notion of the 'transcendental subject' which informs the work of Saussure, and have sought to define the ways in which subjectivity itself is constructed through systems of signification (e.g. Coward and Ellis, 1977; Silverman, 1983). The work of Lacan, in particular, has emphasised the role of language in the production of the subject : the child's entry into language (the symbolic order) is the means whereby it becomes conscious of itself as an autonomous subject. Yet the symbolic order is also, in a sense, the social order, since language is pre-eminently social : and in this way, Lacan's work may be seen to provide at least the foundations for a social theory of learning.

According to Lacan (1953)

> 'The form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity (.....) What I seek in speech is the response of the other. What constitutes me as subject is my question. In order to be recognised by the other, I utter what was only in view of what will be. In order to find him, I call him by a name that he must assume or refuse in order to reply to me'. (pp 85-6).

Lacan's psychoanalytical account of the role of language connects very productively with certain forms of linguistics, and in particular the work of Benveniste. Central to both is the notion of address, which I shall study in some detail in relation to television. Benveniste (1971) points to the fact that certain signifiers - notably pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' - only acquire signifieds within specific discursive transactions:

> 'In some way language puts forth 'empty' forms which each speaker, in the exercise of discourse, appropriates to himself and which he relates to his 'person', at the same time defining himself as I and a partner as you.' (p.227).

In this sense, both for Lacan and for Benveniste, subjectivity is not an essence, a property of the individual, but a relationship, or a set of relationships, which is invoked or activated by means of discourse. Subjectivity is thus, in Benveniste's terms, 'the emergence in the being of a fundamental property of language'.

As I have explained, language for these writers is a social system which pre-exists individual utterances. Language delimits the range of meanings, and hence the forms of subjectivity, which can be produced, and these limitations inevitably reproduce social relations, and thus relations of power. Recent work in social theory has also foregrounded this complex relationship between discourse and power. Thompson (1984), for example, in an extremely lucid review of theories of ideology, argues that

> '... to study ideology is primarily to investigate, not a particular type of discourse linked to a particular type of society, but rather the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination. The study of ideology is fundamentally concerned with language, for it is largely within language that meaning is mobilized in defence of domination.' (p 35).

The work of Foucault, in particular, has provided a number of instances of the ways in which particular discursive practices have historically operated as means of normalisation and social regulation. At the same time, Foucault (e.g. 1979) has emphasised that power itself should be conceived, not as a possession or a property of a monolithic dominant group, but as a relationship which is always characterised by resistance. Power is exercised, not upon individuals, but through their actions, and with greater or lesser degrees of compliance. Particular discursive transactions - such as watching television programmes - thus construct relations of what Foucault terms power/knowledge, yet in complex and contradictory ways. In this sense, subjectivity

itself should be seen, not as an achieved and fully coherent state of being, but as contradictory and fragmentary. Specific discourses may seek to construct an imaginary coherence, a unitary subject position, although this itself is a process without guarantees of success.

The work of Henriques et al. (1984) provides a number of instances of such analysis which considerably extend the theoretical approach I have very briefly sketched here. In particular, Walkerdine's contribution provides a valuable critique of 'child-centred pedagogy' which is highly relevant to my concerns in this paper. Walkerdine (1984) attempts to chart the relationship between child-centred pedagogy and Piaget's theory of child development. She argues that Piaget defined the development of the child as essentially a development away from the dominance of the emotions towards scientific rationality. Child-centred pedagogy, with its rhetorical claims about liberating the 'true nature' of the child, has in fact functioned as a means of regulation and normalization which has precisely operated to <u>produce</u> the 'natural' rational individual. These practices, Walkerdine argues,

> 'involved making sure that the individual developed away from passion, emotionality and aggression, towards love (caritas), rationality and sanity.' (p 180)

In this sense, child-centred pedagogy and developmental psychology have worked together to produce children as normalised subjects or citizens through the <u>discursive practice</u> of teaching. In this sense, in analysing the discursive practices of teaching

we are examining the ways in which children and teachers are subjectively produced.

This perspective explicitly rejects the division between the 'individual' and the 'social', between 'child psychology' on the one hand and 'socialisation' on the other (cf. Ingleby, 1974). For this reason it seems to me to provide a point of contact between the positive insights of the two approaches to children and television discussed earlier, and in many respects to avoid their weaknesses. In this account, the production of subjectivity is inherently a social process, which occurs through the operation of specific discursive practices. Television for young children is one instance of such a practice, which works to produce subjectivity, to generate forms of consciousness and orientations to the world, rather than merely desirable or undesirable attitudes.

The child-centred pedagogy which, as I shall indicate, informs much pre-school television in Britain, is one in which, according to Dunn (1977), 'A child is not so much prepared for school as helped to live' (p 16, my emphasis). Likewise, Richard Callanan, a former producer of You and Me states in the series' notes that the programme aims to help children learn 'about themselves, their feelings and their place in the world' (quoted by Choat et al., 1985b, p 63). Yet precisely how do such programmes help children to 'live'? How do they define the child's 'place in the world'? How do they attempt to produce the subjectivity of 'the child' itself?

PART TWO

1. Introduction

Educational television for pre-school children has been a relatively recent development in Britain, dating back only as far as 1972. Early initiatives in this area followed in the wake of Sesame Street, which began in the United States in 1969. Although Sesame Street was seen by British broadcasters as evidence that television could be used to teach this age group with considerable success, they were concerned from the start to develop a different approach. In particular, the pedagogic style of Sesame Street was seen as inappropriate to the British context, and for this reason the BBC did not take up the offer to screen it (although it has since shown another CTW production, The Electric Company, leaving Sesame Street to independent broadcasting.) Dunn (1977) provides a rationale for this decision as follows:

> 'The essential difference between the Sesame Street approach and that of our own nursery, infant and primary schools is that the first starts with a learning programme, the second with a child' (p 15).

Like the vast majority of writers on pre-school television, Dunn is very much an advocate of the progressivist, child-centred orthodoxy of British primary education, and it is on this basis that she rejects the behavioural objectives approach of Sesame Street. Literacy, she argues, does not proceed merely from rote learning and letter recognition, but from a broader

orientation to experience:

> 'Such making in the mind, communication through written words, rests first on experience and recognition of the things and people about which books are written, and second on innate ability to acquire and use a skill' (p 18).

You and Me is one of the most successful and longest-running British series for the 4-5 age group: it began in 1974, and is currently broadcast four times a week by the BBC. The series has evolved considerably over this period, and although I have not had access to early programmes, I have been able to identify significant changes in the series over the last five years. (My analysis is based on programmes transmitted in the academic year 1984-85, which include repeats of programmes made as far back as 1980-81). Broadly speaking, these changes could be defined as a shift away from a more didactic approach, and towards a more child-centred, or progressivist one. In a sense, You and Me has moved away from the pedagogic style of Sesame Street, and has sought to develop a pedagogy more in line with the professional ideology of British pre-school and primary education. Given the crucial role of parents and teachers as 'mediators' of educational television, indicated in the preface to this paper, this development could be seen as one significant reason for the series' continuing success in terms of viewing figures.

This progressivist orientation is quite explicitly stated in the General Introduction to the BBC's notes on the series:

> 'We start from the belief that children learn more than they are taught - that just as they learn to speak their own complex language so too they begin to learn other ways of understanding their world. They do this as they develop emotionally and mentally, as they become conscious of their own needs and in response to outside stimulus if it is there. It is not that adults should stand by and do nothing, nor that there is no place for formal, direct teaching. Adult involvement and teaching are, of course, necessary but more fundamental are a stimulating environment, a sympathetic pair of adult ears and the opportunity for a child to reach out to a new idea at the moment of his/her readiness'. (BBC, 1985, p 4).

The series' current producer, Nicci Crowther,* mentioned the work of educationalists like Bruner, Donaldson and Holt as influences on the series:

> 'It was influences ... which were saying 'see it from the child's point of view'. And if you actually start with real life, start where the kids are at, and then try to build from there, it's more successful than trying to find what the curriculum is, and then working down and trying to relate it to kids. I think that is our major quarrel with what Sesame Street does.'*

As I shall indicate, this progressivist approach has significant implications, not merely in terms of the 'content' of the

* NOTE: All quotations from the series producer are taken from an interview conducted by the author in December 1985.

series, but also in terms of its formal properties, and the way in which it addresses its viewers.

2. Representation

One particular aspect of this progressivist emphasis which has increasingly (if somewhat belatedly) come to influence educational broadcasting in Britain, is that of 'multiculturalism'. There remain significant limitations to this strategy: the dangers of tokenism, or of a bland approach which merely glosses over structural inequalities are apparent in many instances (Buckingham, 1983; Ferguson, 1985). Here again, broadcasting has inevitably had to adapt in line with changes in teachers' professional ideologies, and in some situations would appear to be in advance of them: multicultural series like You and Me regularly receive complaints from teachers disturbed by the presence of too many black faces on their screens (cf. Choat, Griffin and Hobart, 1985a, who report similar reactions).

This multicultural emphasis is explicitly stated in the series' notes:

> 'One factor in education which has recently received a lot of attention is the importance of self-respect and self-confidence. As children fail when they are expected to fail, so too children succeed when their efforts are valued and their personalities, sex, race and culture are seen in a positive light. In the series we try to represent the full range of cultural experience in the country, use the voices and thoughts of children themselves, give proper status to their own attempts at

> 'understanding, build their self-esteem and and show that learning is not separate from life but one of the most enjoyable aspects of it.' (BBC, 1985, p 5)

The programmes transmitted in 1984/85 feature a broad ethnic mix, including Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Irish, Cypriot and Chinese as well as white Anglo-Saxon children. There is also a range of regional accents, with the two central characters in the more recent programmes, the puppets Cosmo and Dibs, speaking in muted Geordie and London accents respectively. The documentary sequences feature working-class as well as middle-class families. Fathers are shown engaged in child care, as well as at work. Mothers are less frequently seen at work, although there are instances of a woman tram-driver and a woman doctor. Other programmes feature a mentally disabled boy, girls learning carpentry, an elderly woman living on a canal boat and a woman Punjabi teacher, to cite just a few examples.

One indication of developments in this area may be found by comparing the central puppet characters featured in the more recent programmes (produced since 1983) with those of the earlier ones. Crow and Alice, the earlier presenters, are clearly differentiated in terms of both gender and class. Crow is male, and speaks with a pompous standard English accent, while Alice is a female hamster who speaks with a rather plaintive northern accent. Crow is typically domineering and self-confident, while Alice is uncertain and unassertive.

Alice is often seen engaged in domestic tasks, and when she attempts to step outside her role tends to suffer ignominiously: in one episode, Crow struts around dressed as 'Supercrow', while Alice's attempts to become 'Wonderwoman' end in her literally getting burnt. Furthermore, Crow generally possesses superior knowledge, with which he instructs Alice. One episode begins with Alice puzzling over a bicycle she has made, which has square wheels. Crow proceeds to inform her, in mocking and patronising tones, that wheels have to be round, and even 'happens' to have some round wheels available.

Cosmo and Dibs, the puppets introduced in the later programmes, are also differentiated according to gender - Cosmo is female, Dibs male - although, as Nicci Crowther, the series' producer, suggested, there has been a conscious attempt to avoid gender stereotyping in terms of their personality characteristics and their physical appearance. For this viewer at least, it remains extraordinarily difficult to remember which is male and which is female, and it would be extremely difficult to argue that either character is consistently shown to be more competent or knowledgeable than the other. Nicci Crowther defined the difference between them as follows:

> 'Cosmo is generally more confident, but also more foolhardy. Dibs is a slightly quieter, soppier person, but with inner strengths!'

Nevertheless, she pointed out that even these characteristics were not regarded as fixed, and that the writers were careful to reverse them from time to time. The overall intention, she

claimed, was to produce 'rounded personalities', partly in order to make it easier for the series to explore emotional conflicts and issues, which would be more difficult to do with more clearly stereotyped characters.

In certain other respects, You and Me does have distinct limitations. Certainly in the programmes surveyed here, the nuclear family remains the norm, and although the traditional roles of mothers and fathers have tended to shift, those of parents and children remain largely unquestioned. Like nearly all texts produced for children (and here I would include written texts as well as television programmes), You and Me tends to represent relationships between adults and children as essentially harmonious: adults always know what is best for children and act in their interests. Children are typically seen helping adults, and if conflicts arise between them, these are nearly always the result of misunderstandings, rather than genuine and unresolvable conflicts of interest. The extent to which material for children of this age can, or indeed should, open up and explore such conflicts, is probably quite limited. As I shall indicate, the narratives of You and Me are extremely careful to reassure viewers that the resolution to conflict is always within reach, if only because to defer it would be to generate distress - and in this respect they are similar to the narratives of many fairy tales and children's cartoons.

These observations lead on to the central concerns of my analysis in the following two sections. As I have argued in the first part of this paper, an exclusive concentration on

representation may lead one to ignore the issue of how viewers are invited to make sense of texts, and how they are positioned in relation to the representations provided. If notions of 'normality' or 'normalisation' are indeed significant - as I shall suggest they are - they need to be defined, not merely in terms of representations but also in terms of the operations of the text, how it attempts to orientate the viewer and to construct particular forms of subjective experience of 'the real'. In other words, we need to examine not only how You and Me represents children but also how it addresses or interpellates its audience as children.

3. The Implied Viewer

The way in which a television programme represents the world can also be seen as one way in which it attempts to position or implicate its viewers. If its representations are to be recognisable, to make sense, to viewers, they must inevitably connect with their existing understandings and experiences. In terms of the 'script model' proposed by Durkin (1985), the programme makers must assume a degree of correlation between the 'scripts' of programmes and the 'social scripts' of viewers, the repertoires of meaning they use in attempting to understand the world. However, we can also identify a number of more specific strategies which attempt to establish such a complicity between text and viewer, or, more accurately, which aim to construct the subjectivity of viewers. The following section will discuss three such strategies, using illustrations from You and Me.

a. Modes of address

As a programme which, at least in its most recent incarnation, uses a magazine format, You and Me employs a range of different modes of address. In terms of the typology outlined by Nichols (1977), the overall balance would appear to have shifted from direct to indirect address. The older programmes are typically introduced by adult presenters, on film or in the studio, who greet the viewer and speak direct to the camera. In what one might term the most hegemonic variant of this mode, the presenters ask questions of the viewers and wait to 'hear' their replies. For example, one programme features a presenter called Betty, who, with a group of young assistants, demonstrates how to prepare souvlakia. Her questions to the viewer typically take the following form:

> (pointing to box of eggs) Do you know what these are? (pause) They're eggs. A box of eggs. (removes egg) and one egg. (to camera) I expect you can say 'egg'. Say 'egg' so that I can hear you. (pause : smile) Yes! I heard you!

Further questions are slightly more open, although none are left unanswered:

> (looking at vegetables) I wonder where these things come from? (to camera) Do you know where they come from? (pause) Yes! From the ground.

In this mode of address, the viewer is clearly expected to answer aloud, and is rewarded for correct responses. For example, another programme from the same sequence is introduced by a Chinese presenter:

(to camera) Hello. My name is Pik Sen. Now you say 'hello' to me. (inclines head, 'listens', smiles) Good!

Not all the questions asked in these early programmes are as closed as these, nor are they all delivered with the same stilted and exaggerated intonation. 'Sam', a regular presenter on the early programmes, asks questions both of the viewer and of his young playmates. Although these are predominantly questions with single, or very few correct answers, these answers are provided by the children themselves before being confirmed by 'Sam'. In this sense, the presenter's role is closer to that of an interviewer, and while his questions constitute an implicit invitation to the viewer to respond, they do not contain the degree of direct compulsion (particularly as conveyed through pauses and looks to camera) of the previous examples.

As I have indicated, this kind of direct address and questioning occurs less frequently in the more recent programmes. Cosmo and Dibs rarely look or speak to camera, except when encouraged to say goodbye by their adult friends at the end of the programme. These adults (who are stall-holders in the market where the puppets 'work') do occasionally direct brief remarks to camera. For example, in one programme, Cosmo and Dibs have constructed a toy road:

COSMO: Hey, Mr B! We've found all the pieces of road.

MR B: (to Cosmo and Dibs) Hey, that looks really good! (To camera, close up) It does, doesn't it!

Occasionally, these adult characters will invite viewers to join in with a song at the end of the programme, or to play a game with the puppets. These invitations to respond or participate are sometimes delivered in cutaway close-ups, as in the above example.

Nicci Crowther described this approach as follows:

> 'What we say to presenters is: it's like you're in a restaurant, and there's something very riotous and funny going on at your table. There are people sitting at other tables who by necessity are being drawn into it, just because they're present: and you occasionally give them meaningful glances. You might even occasionally ask them to join in with what you're doing'.

In this sense, the sketches in the later programmes do operate a form of vestigial direct address, although the viewer is generally positioned more as an onlooker, albeit one who is occasionally permitted a privileged point of view (as described in the following section).

By contrast, the documentary sequences use voice-over narration as a more explicit means of 'revealing' the world: as Nichols (1977) argues, such narration 'invokes, and promises to gratify, a desire to know'. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in style between the earlier programmes and the more recent ones. The earlier programmes tend to use an unidentified narrator - the mode which Nichols has aptly termed 'the voice of God'. However, in certain instances, the puppets Crow and Alice are also used. In one example, which follows a

day in the life of a boy called Robert, Crow and Alice provide a voice-over commentary on the filmed sequences: as indicated above, it is Crow who typically possesses superior knowledge, and his patronising assurance is set against Alice's hesitancy -

ALICE: I think they're making cakes, Crow.

CROW: Oh yes! They've already mixed up the eggs and the butter.

The family presented in this programme is extremely traditional in terms of gender roles, and the narration helps to reinforce the 'naturalness' of this arrangement. Yet at times an incipient feminist critique begins to emerge:

(Shot of Robert's father leaving for work. Voice over:)

CROW: That's how the family gets enough money to buy food and clothes. Dad gets paid for going to work.

ALICE: What about Robert's Mum? She works all day long at home, from getting up to going to bed. Does she get paid, Crow?

CROW: Oh no! But she does work very hard.

The documentary sequences in more recent programmes are significantly different, both in terms of content - there is an increasing attempt to counter stereotyped gender roles - and also in terms of mode of address. In general, there is considerably less voice-over narration, with some sequences only having a very brief introduction - for example, 'My name is Emily. I'm four, and I'm going to school.' - with the rest

of the sequence being in indirect address - in this example we 'overhear', Emily's mother, her friends and Emily herself talking as they go to school. Narration functions here more as a form of commentary, providing a minimal degree of explanation: unusually for documentary, the image track in fact carries the dominant burden of information.

A further significant difference is that these sequences in the later programmes are more likely to be narrated by the children themselves. Where the earlier programmes feature adults, they are largely cast in teacher-type roles, asking questions and directing activities. The later programmes, by contrast, tend to use children as a means of introducing the viewer to the lives of adults: and children are more likely to be shown helping adults, rather than merely following instructions. This attempt to show the world through the eyes of children is reinforced by the fact that the camera is often positioned at child - rather than adult - height, and by occasional shots from the child's point of view.

According to Nicci Crowther, this approach is part of the overall child-centred ethos of the programme:

> 'We're trying to get to a situation where the children or the surrogate children are doing all the explanation that needs to be done ... It's one child to another, is the message that's coming from that, rather than having to go up to an adult and then down again. It gives value and status to their own words.'

Yet such an approach inevitably requires a considerable

degree of adult intervention, for example in order to extract a coherent commentary, and to edit together the final sequence: the programme is clearly constructing the illusion that one child is speaking to another, by rendering that intervention invisible to the viewer. In this sense, the difference between the earlier and later programmes is primarily one of the type of adult mediation, rather than necessarily the degree of it.

A further mode of address which is occasionally featured in You and Me is one which might be termed instructional. Here, an unidentified voice-over is provided to facilitate number - and word - recognition. For example, one sequence which recurs in a number of the later programmes is on the theme of 'wheels': over images of bicycles, tricycles, lorries,,and so on, the narrator tells us how many wheels each of these use. Towards the end of each sequence, the relevant number appears on the screen. This more directly instructional approach is fairly rare in You and Me, although it is very commonly used in Sesame Street.

A variant of this mode in the more recent You and Me programmes is in the 'Henry the Kangaroo' sequences. Here, the narrator is identified as an animated kangaroo, who reads various 'social sight words' from signs and notices. Significantly, however, Henry is himself learning these words from a book which he carries: and, as I shall indicate below, he occasionally discovers their meaning almost accidentally.

A final, and related, mode of address is that of storytelling.

Here, a story is narrated in voice-over to accompany a sequence of still images. In the later programmes, these voices are usually identified as those of Cosmo and Dibs' adult friends: they offer to read the story, and we are often shown the book they are reading from. In the earlier programmes, the voices are usually unidentified 'voices of-God', and we are rarely shown the books they are reading from.

While this typology of modes of address is not necessarily exhaustive, it does indicate a number of significant differences, particularly between earlier and later programmes, which will be considered further in the following section.

b. Narrative and point of view

Theories of narrative have drawn attention to the different ways in which narrative may position the reader in relation to knowledge (e.g. Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). To state this schematically, the reader may at any point in a narrative know more than, less than, or the same as particular characters. In a variety of different ways, a narrative may vouchsafe privileged knowledge to the reader which is hidden from characters; it may refuse to allow us access to knowledge which certain characters possess, and which we may know they possess; or alternatively, it may enable us to discover new information as the same time as the characters, often, in film and television, through the use of point-of-view shots.

Although educational television may employ each of these modalities, programmes for younger viewers typically use the

former to a greater extent. Sketches in Sesame Street, for example, often feature characters playing jokes on other characters, and allow us to participate by letting us in on the joke at an early stage. Our knowledge is thus in advance of that of the characters who are the 'butt' of the joke - often characters who are typified as slow or stupid, such as Big Bird. The BBC series Everyday Maths, described by Dorrian (1983), featured two characters whose incompetence at basic calculations was designed to enable even the slowest mathematicians in the audience to solve problems before them. As Dorrian argues, this approach may well be reassuring for viewers, but their reassurance depends upon a sense of superiority to others who are thereby defined as inadequate.

Insofar as it privileges, or even flatters, the viewer, this device could be seen to establish a particularly powerful form of complicity between text and viewer. As the following examples indicate, it is used in You and Me, both as a pedagogic strategy and as a means of defusing conflict, although it is comparatively rare for it to be used at the expense of the characters themselves.

As a pedagogic strategy, this device is often used in what might be termed a problem solving or discovery learning context. Discovery can take very simple forms, as for example in many of the Henry the Kangaroo sequences, where we are shown a particular sign before Henry himself discovers it. In the manner of a pantomime sketch, where a clown asks the audience where a particular character is, and the audience ritualistically

screams 'behind you!', so Henry is wont to ask the viewer where a particular sign may be found, when it is clearly to be seen above his head or, indeed, behind his back. A slightly more complex example occurs when Henry discovers the meaning of the sign 'Bus Stop'. Finding a portable 'Bus Stop' sign on the street, he moves it in case somebody bumps into it. He leaves it on the pavement, only to cause a bus to stop behind him. The bus conductor steps off the bus:

BUS CONDUCTOR: Now, you!

HENRY: Who, Me?

BUS CONDUCTOR: You can't keep moving that sign around. Look here (pointing). This is where the bus stop sign should be (close up of Bus Stop).

HENRY: I can't see. What does it say?

BUS CONDUCTOR: Bus Stop.

HENRY: Oh, yes!

It is significant that these more explicitly didactic sequences are always repeated in following programmes. This repetition, which is used extensively in Sesame Street, enables regular viewers to predict more accurately, and thus to be further ahead of the characters in their understanding than on first viewing.

A more extended example of this discovery approach occurs in a Cosmo and Dibs sketch, where Gary, an adult presenter, asks the puppets to move a large number of pots and bowls onto a small shelf. After some minutes of trial and error, they discover that the only way to fit them all on is to put the smaller containers inside the larger ones. The puppets'

discussion provides a number of cues for viewers to offer their own solutions to the problem.

Although sequences like this clearly are didactic, they are far less explicitly so than the direct questioning of the older programmes, described above. Participation is invited implicitly, rather than by overt demands to viewers to respond. The series' notes provide the rationale for this approach as follows:

> 'An active response from children watching is one of the chief aims of educational television but this response need not always be spoken. In the early stages of becoming confident with anything (be it an idea or a song) a child may prefer to try out his/her responses in silence. Pressure to speak out may sometimes force a child to make mistakes it would otherwise avoid and getting things 'wrong' is no encouragement to learning. How often are our questions to children genuinely used to help them communicate and how often are they crude and superfluous tests of what we think they should know? Questions on television are particularly difficult as there cannot be genuine two-way communication. So in this series there will be very few direct questions for children to answer. However, there are many times when questions are implied and moments when the children can contribute their own ideas (for example when the puppets are trying to solve a problem or play a game).' (BBC, 1985, p 4).

As I have indicated, this manipulation of knowledge within the narrative is one way in which questions may be 'implied' and it provides a further example of the way in which the programme's formal strategies reflect its progressivist pegagogic style.

A slightly different use of this device occurs in a number of the Cosmo and Dibs sketches, particularly those which are concerned with managing conflicts between characters. Here, we are vouchsafed privileged knowledge which is not available to the characters and which represents a potential resolution to conflict. For example, one such sketch begins with Dibs drawing with his new pen. In response to Cosmo's question, we learn that Jenny (one of the adult presenters) has given Dibs the pen as a present for helping her on her stall. Cosmo is rather upset, because she hasn't been given a pen, although she also helped on the stall. Mike (another adult presenter) enters, and asks Dibs to help him find some beads he has dropped. Dibs exits to look for them, leaving his pen behind. In a close-up, we see the pen drop down the front of the stall as Mike knocks it with the box he is carrying. Mike then tells Cosmo that Jenny wants to see him: and as Cosmo exits in search of what she hopes will be her pen, Mike begins to write out some labels, using an identical pen to Dibs'. When Dibs, and subsequently Cosmo, return, Dibs accuses both Mike and Cosmo in turn of taking his pen. The ensuing conflict is resolved when Mike finds Dibs' pen: and the sketch ends when the characters label their pens in order to avoid further confusion.

This sketch does contain some more explicitly didactic elements, insofar as it provides opportunities to see the characters' names being written out, but its primary function is to explore conflicts between the characters. Yet it is notable that these

conflicts arise from an accident, and that the viewer is given privileged information (via the close-up of the pen being knocked off the stall) which enables him/her to understand the reason for it, and to foresee its potential resolution. In this sense, while the narrative opens up conflict, it does not do so in ways which put our positive estimation of the characters significantly at risk.

You and Me rarely shows characters playing tricks on other characters, in the manner of Sesame Street, although there are occasional instances. One Cosmo and Dibs sketch, for example, features Cosmo pretending to read from a story book, although Dibs protests that she cannot read. Through a 'privileged' point-of-view shot over Cosmo's shoulder, we discover that the book (Dick Bruna's Good Night) in fact has no words, only pictures. When Cosmo's deception is exposed, she is duly ashamed, but the potential ill-feeling disappears when Dibs discovers that he too can 'read' the book. Here again, conflict is quickly resolved, and any sense of the unpleasantness or inadequacy of particular characters easily dispelled.

c. Modelling

One further means of defining the differences in pedagogic style between the earlier and later episodes of You and Me is by considering the ways in which they provide models of the teaching and learning process. As well as directly and indirectly attempting to 'teach' the viewer, as outlined above, the programme also represents a variety of forms of teaching and learning. These representations are implicitly offered as

models, through which viewers may not only learn, but also learn how to learn : in terms of the distinction made by Olson and Bruner (1974), they convey knowledge, but also implicitly model skills, or processes for acquiring knowledge. These representations of teaching and learning provide surrogates with whom the viewer is invited to identify, both in the form of real children, and also in the form of puppets. The latter have the obvious advantage for producers of being more easily controlled : and it may well also be the case that vaguely humanoid puppets like Cosmo and Dibs can facilitate a greater degree of identification on the part of viewers precisely because of their relative lack of specificity - unlike real children, who are likely to possess highly concrete, and potentially alienating, characteristics, puppets may leave more 'space' for imaginative projection.

In general, the more recent programmes use surrogates more extensively and in different ways from the earlier ones. As I have indicated, adult presenters in the earlier programmes, are usually accompanied by young helpers or playmates, with whom they adopt a more or less 'teacherly' role, asking relatively closed questions with a limited range of correct answers. Within the documentary sequences, we see children being taught, often by their parents, to perform various tasks - making a kite, baking cakes, and gardening, for example. Again, it is predominantly the teacher figures who ask questions, and these are almost exclusively questions to which they themselves already possess the answers.

In the recent programmes, as described above, there are more instances of discovery learning, of children or surrogate children asking questions and solving problems without the aid of adults. Although in most instances, Cosmo and Dibs are given tasks to perform by the adult presenters, they are often left alone to work out how to do them, as the example described above about the containers illustrates. One programme explores the uncertainty they face in coping with such demands, when Gary asks them to telephone a fellow stall-holder and to pay the milkman for him. After considerable anxiety, they manage to perform these tasks successfully - much to their surprise and pleasure. Here, and in some of the documentary sequences, surrogates are used both as a means of teaching and as a vehicle for exploring 'difficult' emotions, as in an episode about a girl whose pet bird dies, or another about a boy with a mentally disabled brother.

Broadly speaking, then, this changing use of surrogates reflects a shift away from a representation of learning as passive, towards an emphasis on active learning. In the earlier programmes, learning occurs almost exclusively as a consequence of teaching, which, at its most didactic, can appear inquisitorial (for example in the mode of questioning adopted by Betty, described at the start of this section) or even bullying (for example in the exchanges between Crow and Alice). In the later programmes, there is a stress on learning by discovery and problem-solving, and a concern to address the affective as well as the cognitive aspects of learning, which are often explored with considerable sensitivity (as in the examples cited in the previous paragraph).

These latter aspects will be considered in more detail in the following section.

4. A Progressive Pedagogy?

In a number of respects, then, the pedagogic style of You and Me has shifted away from a more overtly didactic approach, and towards a progressivist or child-centred one. This shift can be demonstrated not only in terms of the changes within particular segments, certain of which have been described in the previous section, but also in terms of how these segments are organised within complete programmes. Here there has been a move away from programmes organised around a single theme, towards programmes with multiple themes. Programmes from the earlier series typically focus on themes like transport, clothes or houses. Each theme is approached in a variety of ways, through documentary, sketches, stories and more overtly didactic sequences. By contrast, although the more recent programmes contain a similar range of sequences, these tend not to be linked by a common theme or concept.

Nicci Crowther described this change as reflecting a different concept of the learning process :

> 'We always felt that, particularly at this age, and maybe always, kids learn rather than are taught. What we're doing is offering them up experiences and material that's been structured, so that if it is concepts we're trying to put over, it might just help them one stage further to be able to build a concept. One of the problems with the old You and Me was

> 'that if children weren't ready for the letter 'P' or matching one-to-one, there was no way that twelve minutes of it was going to teach them it; and if they'd got it, it was lost time. I think that when you've only got a minute, for the kids that know it, it's just revision and it's fun, and the ones that aren't quite ready for it are maybe just slotting it somewhere into their brain where it's making something make sense a little bit - and maybe next time it comes along, in six months' time, it'll make even more sense. I hope that the series doesn't try to <u>teach</u> too many things.'

The emphasis on learning readiness, on learning rather than being taught, which emerges strongly here and in the extracts from the series notes quoted above (p. 26) is clearly indicative of the progressivist approach. Learning is seen here as cognitively active, as spontaneous, and as conforming to a 'natural' sequence of development. Teaching is primarily a matter of providing adequate stimulation or experience, and must not seek to 'push' the child beyond its existing conceptual capacity, or when it is not yet 'ready' to learn.

Thus, even where the more recent programmes appear more overtly didactic, as for example in the Henry the Kangaroo sequences, the emphasis is more on a general <u>orientation</u> to reading than on <u>teaching</u> reading skills per se. Reading is approached via a story, and in the form of 'social sight words', rather than by attempting to teach letter recognition, as in

Sesame Street. In Nicci Crowther's words:

> 'Kids who are not ready for the idea can just enjoy it for Henry the Kangaroo hopping about the street. They might be starting to get the message that signs are there for a purpose, and carry meaning, that a group of words carry meaning, but I don't think that we're necessarily trying to teach kids 'Learn that word, it says 'Library', and apply it!' It's actually a much more general thing. It's to do with being out in the street and starting to see what the function of print is.'

In many respects, this emphasis is consistent with psycholinguistic accounts of the reading process, such as that provided for example by the work of Frank Smith (1971,1973), and as such it could be argued to be a more effective approach, at least in the longer term, than the 'drilling' of single letters, which features prominently in Sesame Street. Whether this is in fact the case is clearly a question for empirical research.

Nevertheless, the claims for such an approach to reading, and to learning in general, extend beyond the issue of effectiveness. The progressivist account of the learning process claims to provide a more accurate description of how children learn, but, as Walkerdine (1984) argues, it also produces particular forms of learning.

As Walkerdine argues.

> 'The irony of the productivity of discursive practices is that developmental psychology,

> 'in providing the apparatuses for the production of truth about learning, in an important sense produces what it means to learn.' (p 191, my emphasis).

In other words, it is not as simple as saying, to quote the series notes, that 'Children at four and five just do not learn like that' (BBC, 1985, p 4). Progressivism, as a discursive practice, does not merely 'describe', it also produces children as learners, and as subjects, in particular ways. As Walkerdine demonstrates, the 'truth' about learning which developmental psychology provides is premissed on the notion of the pre-existent unitary subject, and hence cannot acknowledge the fact that social practices are central to the formation of subjectivity itself.

In the final section of this paper, I shall attempt to indicate the relevance of this critique of progressivism to an analysis of You and Me. My intention here is not to advocate a return to the more didactic approach of the earlier programmes, or indeed to that of Sesame Street: in many respects I would regard the progressivist emphasis of the more recent You and Me programmes as significantly preferable, for reasons I have implicitly indicated in preceding sections. Nevertheless, this emphasis does raise a number of questions which deserve further investigation, not least in terms of their empirical implications for children's learning from television.

One significant element in the more recent programmes, briefly indicated towards the end of the previous section, is their

broad concern for the affective aspects of learning. A number of the Cosmo and Dibs sketches in particular explore such issues, often through narratives which centre on conflict between the characters, in the manner described above. These sketches are termed 'emotion-sketches' in the series notes, and their function is described as follows:

> 'They are intended to help the child's personal development by providing non-threatening, fictional examples close to everyday experience. The aims are to help children a) talk comfortably about feelings, b) understand that their feelings are shared by others, c) extend their emotional vocabulary.' (BBC, 1985, p 7).

The notes provide brief summaries of the themes of these sketches, which give some idea of their range: for example -

> '"Adult Anger" : Cosmo makes Gary very angry but they end up as friends again.
>
> "Acknowledging Others' Feelings" : Cosmo at last recognises that Dibs is in a bad humour.
>
> "Sharing" : Cosmo and Dibs find it's not very easy to share.
>
> "Liking, Loving" : Charu and the puppets declare their feelings for each other.
>
> "Separation" : Dibs becomes worried when he thinks Cosmo and Charu are leaving him on his own."
>
> (BBC, 1984, pp 6-8).

Other sketches concern issues such as 'Jealousy', 'Justice', 'Taming Fear' and 'Being Different'.

What is notable about these sketches is that conflicts typically arise from misunderstandings between characters, rather than from any negative characteristics they might possess, and that conflicts are always quickly resolved when understanding is restored. In 'Adult Anger', for example, Gary is angry with Cosmo because she hasn't moved some boxes for him as he asked. However, he calms down when he sees that Cosmo is making a sign for his stall instead. The puppets' basic role, here as in the majority of other sketches, is to help adults: 'We help everyone we can', they say on their first appearance in the series. 'Jealousy' finds Dibs helping Mr B to mend a plate, leaving Cosmo feeling excluded; yet the situation is reversed when Cosmo helps Mr B to make a sign. The puppets eventually discover that they were wrong to feel excluded - it was just that Mr B needed their help at different times.

In Piagetian terms, these sketches are providing models of children learning to move beyond egocentrism. 'Negative' emotions such as selfishness and jealousy give way to 'positive' qualities like co-operativeness and caring, which are based on an understanding of others' point of view. Through what amount to moral fables, the characters acquire a vocabulary for describing their emotions (key words like 'anger', 'sharing' and 'jealous' are repeated and emphasised in the dialogue) and are shown learning the virtues of controlling them in order to behave in rational, socially acceptable and 'helpful' ways. In other words, the sketches have a normative or normalising function: by inviting the viewer to identify with surrogate

children, and by providing the means whereby potentially distressing conflicts between them may be resolved, the narrative itself operates to control undesirable emotions. In this sense, the sketches function to produce normal subjects, in a similar manner to the child-centred pedagogy described by Walkerdine. Through various regulatory mechanisms (in this instance, narrative and mode of address) the child is channelled away from the emotions, towards rationality and sanitized, non-passionate, forms of love.

A similar movement may be discerned in the sketches which deal with fantasy. Here, the narrative operates to control and contain fantasy by placing it within 'quotation marks', and thus to regulate the relationship between fantasy and reality. One example features Cosmo and Dibs pretending to go on a sea voyage, using the goods on their market stall as 'props'. They invite Gary to accompany them, but only as 'cabin boy' to their 'captains': 'you're just as important as us,' says Dibs, 'except that we tell you what to do'. Their fantasy begins to go slightly awry as Cosmo and Dibs imagine contradictory 'islands' on the horizon, and the sketch ends as they return to reality. What is notable here is that although fantasy forms the subject matter of the sketch, the viewer is clearly distanced from it, both by the fact that it is enclosed within, and returns to, mundane reality, but also because of the contradiction between Cosmo and Dibs' version of the fantasy. In other words the sketch is about the concept of fantasy, rather than inviting us to partake in fantasy. It is also

notable that it is only in fantasy that the roles of adults and children can be reversed, and that, as in other sketches on this theme, the adults participate in (and, at least in this instance, question) the fantasy.

In general, however, You and Me rarely provides or engages with more imaginative forms of fantasy. Apart from occasional instances, such as a sketch where Cosmo and Dibs imagine they can fly and swim underwater, the series is firmly grounded in a recognisable social reality. This is particularly the case with the Cosmo and Dibs sketches and the documentary sequences, but it is also true of the stories featured in the programme and in the accompanying books, which are predominantly set within the everyday world of children and their families. This emphasis reflects a more general theory of learning, the notion that, in the words of the series notes, 'at this age children's understanding is deeply embedded in their experience' (BBC, 1985, p 4); and the attempt, which Nicci Crowther sees as important, 'to get children to relate their experience to what they're seeing on TV'. Yet in a sense, fantasy might equally be regarded as part of children's experience - which is perhaps the reason why a good deal of writing for children, and indeed by children, is concerned with fantasy and with the potentially powerful and even unpleasant emotions which it can vicariously explore.

Nicci Crowther described this orientation as a set of 'ground rules' which it would now be difficult for the series to break:

> 'The problem has been that we've always wanted to explain what's going on: by saying, 'This is only pretend, but if I were ....' It might not only be confusing, but would also give a false picture of reality if, after four series, Cosmo and Dibs were suddenly in a world that was made of ice-cream, without any explanation. I think in a way it would be unfair on the audience to throw that at them without explaining why, because they've actually got a grip on a reality where Cosmo and Dibs do not live in a world that's made of ice cream. We've set ourselves parameters now which we can't move out of.'

These parameters, as the following quotation indicates, are not merely concerned with realism, however. They also affect the ability of the series to deal with 'negative' emotions or personal characteristics; the regular characters must be seen to be <u>essentially</u> rational and good, and conflict can only arise from momentary misunderstandings:

> 'We wanted to do something directly about sexist name calling, and Dibs saying, 'You can't do that because you're a girl'. But we've set up that Cosmo and Dibs are equal opportunity puppets, and it's not within their characters. Similarly with the presenters - on the whole we're trying to do right by them, make sure that we've got the women presenters hammering up the bunting and carrying all the heavy boxes, and the men being fairly cool about their feelings.... it's just that, having made ground rules for

'yourself, you can't break them'.

In a sense, although the series is concerned to explore conflict, it is its dual commitment both to realism and to 'positive images', as much as any unwillingness to cause distress, which restricts the types of conflict it can deal with. If, as I have argued, it can only deal with conflicts which can be easily resolved, and not with conflicts which are based on fundamental differences of interest, or inequalities, and which may thus be more difficult to resolve, its ability to deal directly with issues like racism and sexism is likely to be limited. Of course, these may well be issues which one would not want to raise with children of this age - although they are certainly factors which already enter into their lives, and which children themselves may raise regardless of teachers' or parents' wishes (see Walkerdine, 1981). Furthermore, the fundamental power-relationship which not only goes largely unquestioned, but is actively reinforced, both in the sketches and the documentary sequences, is that between adults and children. As I have indicated, children are consistently represented as, and implicitly encouraged to be, 'helpful' to adults. In the rare instances where children are seen to refuse or fail to follow adults' instructions, as in the case of the 'Adult Anger' sketch described above, the potential conflict is resolved when they are found to be helpful in other ways. In this sense, the programme may be seen to be attempting to construct children as subjects in both senses of the word - as possessors of a unified subjectivity,

but also within a taken-for-granted nexus of power relationships.

Finally, one might question the extent to which any educational television programme can justifiably be regarded as child-centred. As I have demonstrated, the more recent You and Me programmes clearly seek to position the viewer in a very different way from the earlier ones. Yet it would be mistaken to regard this as a straightforward distinction between 'open' and 'closed' texts (cf. Eco, 1981). While the later programmes clearly invite the viewer to participate in a less directive manner, this is not necessarily to imply that they are less powerful in this respect. Indeed, as I have indicated, the later programmes are possibly more powerful insofar as they actively efface their own enunciation. In terms of Benveniste's (1971) distinction, the later programmes are presented as 'story' rather than as 'discourse'. By almost entirely dispensing with forms of direct address, which precisely draw attention to the fact that the programme is 'spoken', they seek to obliterate all traces of their own constructedness. Similarly, the use of shot/reverse shot patterns in the documentary sequences 'sutures' the viewer into the position of the children who are the subjects of the film, in precisely the manner described by Dayan (1976) as characteristic of dominant narrative cinema. One potential effect of this process is that the film appears to 'speak itself', and thus renders the process of enunciation, and hence of the positioning of the spectator, invisible. In terms of pedagogy, the viewer may only appear to 'learn

without being taught'. In fact, of course, we are being taught - it's just that we no longer see the teacher.

This is not to suggest that the pedagogic strategy of the more recent You and Me is in any simple sense 'invalid', or to imply that it is merely practising some form of elaborate deception. There are inevitably limitations to the extent to which television can be 'child centred': despite broadcasters' arguments that it merely aims to provide 'experience' or 'enrichment' (Buckingham, 1986), educational television cannot avoid teaching. In teaching, it inevitably seeks to construct particular forms of subjectivity, and to define learning in particular ways. What the critique of progressivism implies is that these definitions of learning do not represent some fixed, eternal truth, but are, on the contrary, the product of specific social and historical conditions.

5. Conclusion : Questions for Future Research

The analysis of You and Me contained in the second part of this paper has been intended to raise a number of questions for future research. As indicated in my introduction, textual analysis may be a useful means of generating hypotheses, but it is obviously incapable of accounting for how audiences actually read television. This is perhaps particularly the case with television which is aimed not at adults (let alone adult researchers), but at very young children. Indeed there is a distinct danger that extremely general arguments about 'subject positioning', such as those briefly referenced at the end of the previous section, may degenerate into a form of 'textual

determinism'. As Willemen (1978) argues, the readers of texts are social and historical subjects, not merely subjects of the text. A text may construct a multiplicity of potentially contradictory subject positions, which readers may or may not occupy according to their relationship to discourses which circulate outside the text itself.

Nevertheless, I would contend that approaches derived from Literary Theory and Media Studies can potentially generate a more productive agenda for empirical research into the relationship between the formal features of television and children's learning than has hitherto been the case. Such research would need to address, not merely the effects of 'perceptual salience' (cf. Rice, Huston and Wright, 1983), but also the effects of specific textual strategies, such as narrative and mode of address, which comprise the institutional forms of television. At the same time, the advantage of such approaches over traditional content analysis is that they locate the ideology of texts, not merely on the level of content, but also on that of form: and in this sense, they provide a more productive means of identifying the pedagogy of educational television.

As I have indicated, public debate about children and television has tended to concentrate on a very restricted range of questions, which are in the last analysis extremely superficial. At present, there is a significant danger that it is these questions about television's potential or actual 'harm' to children which may determine the development of Media Education in Britain,

particularly in the primary school. One significant role for future research in this area will be to generate a closer understanding of the process of learning from television, and thus to promote a more informed approach to Media Education.

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